

Cummings also Succeeds on Amendment to Increase Diversity, Curb Hazing

Washington, DC (May 18, 2012)—Today, the House passed by a vote of 394 to 27 an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) introduced by Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Rep. Bob Filner, Ranking Member of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and Rep. Adam Smith, Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee, that significantly expands foreclosure protections for servicemembers, their families, and disabled veterans.

“Our troops fighting overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan should not also have to fight here at home just to keep a roof over the heads of their loved ones,” Cummings said. “This bill expands current law to protect more of our brave men and women in uniform from losing their homes while they protect our freedoms abroad.”

The amendment, which had been introduced previously as H.R. 5747, [Military Family Home Protection Act](#), expands foreclosure protections to servicemembers serving in support of contingency operations, surviving spouses of servicemembers whose deaths are service-related, and veterans who are 100% disabled at the time of discharge due to service-connected injuries.

The amendment also prohibits banks from discriminating against servicemembers who are eligible for protections under SCRA, increases penalties for mortgage-related violations, and requires lenders to designate a compliance officer to ensure that they protect the legal rights of servicemembers.

The amendment was the culmination of a year-long investigation by Cummings into illegal foreclosures against servicemembers, including multiple [document requests](#) to mortgage banks and servicemembers, a congressional [forum](#) co-hosted with Senator Jay Rockefeller, and a staff report, [Fighting on the Home Front](#), detailing how multiple banks had violated the SCRA by illegally foreclosing on servicemembers and charging fees in excess of those permitted by the SCRA.

The [American Legion](#) , [Veterans of Foreign Wars](#) , [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#) , and [Disabled American Veterans](#) all issued letters in support of the amendment.

The House also adopted an amendment introduced by Cummings to increase diversity and curb hazing in the Coast Guard. The amendment expands provisions included in the NDAA authored by Cummings, Rep. Judy Chu, and other Members to address diversity and hazing in the armed services.

“It is critical that Congress do everything in our power to promote a highly qualified and diverse officer corps that truly represents our nation, and these provisions are an essential step toward achieving this goal,” Cummings said.

The legislation directs each component of the Armed Services to:

- develop a plan on diversity, determine metrics to measure progress, and provide an annual report to Congress;
- develop a standardized definition of diversity and provide demographic data on women and minorities; and
- develop a plan to prevent hazing and work with the Department of Defense to develop a national database to track hazing incidents.

A [recent forum](#) co-hosted by Cummings, Senator Ben Cardin, and the Chairs of the Tri-Caucus revealed that the Armed Services had not yet fully implemented 14 of 19 recommendations made by the Military Leadership Diversity Commission.